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## **Mozambique: Violent police assume ‘licence to kill’**

In a report published today, Amnesty International revealed the extent of police violence in Mozambique, saying that police are killing and torturing people with near total impunity.

“Police in Mozambique seem to think they have a licence to kill and the weak police accountability system allows for this,” said Michelle Kagari, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme.

“In almost all cases of human rights violations by police – including unlawful killings – no investigation into the case and no disciplinary action against those responsible has been undertaken, nor has any police officer been prosecuted.”

Mozambican police face numerous challenges stemming from high crime rates, a backlog of criminal cases in the judicial system, and occasional violence against police by criminal elements. These have led to pressure from the public for the police to deal with the crime decisively and forcefully. Police officers have responded to these challenges by using excessive force, including the unlawful killing of suspects.

There have been many cases where excessive use of force by the police has resulted in death – and in some cases the killings appear to be unlawful.

On 5 February 2008, Mozambican police shot at people demonstrating against increased transport fares in the city of Maputo, killing at least three and injuring 30 with stray bullets. Related demonstrations took place in the provinces of Inhambane and Gaza on 11 February, during which the police also fired live ammunition into crowds. A police spokesperson said that live ammunition was used because some officers were “caught by surprise” by the demonstrators.

On 14 August 2007, police grabbed Abrantes Afonso Penicela from his home and pushed him into a car. Abrantes said that the officers gave him a toxic injection and drove him to a secluded area where they beat him until he lost consciousness. The police then shot him in the back of the neck and set him on fire, leaving him for dead. Abrantes somehow survived the attack and managed to crawl to a nearby road where he was found and taken to hospital. He managed to tell his family and police what had happened to him, but died of his injuries later that night. No police officer has been arrested for his killing.

The police have generally been unresponsive to the public, providing very little information to those who have lodged complaints against the police for human rights violations. Victims virtually never receive compensation for these violations.

“Any officer suspected of involvement in human rights violations must be held to account,” said Kagari. “Police officers must be made aware that they cannot torture, beat and kill with impunity. They must be held

responsible for their actions if policing is ever going to change for the better in Mozambique.”

Amnesty International’s report urges the Mozambican authorities to ensure steps are taken to prevent human rights violations from occurring in the first place. The report recommends the revision of the police codes of conduct to bring them in line with international standards.

To see Amnesty International’s recommendations regarding policing in Mozambique and a full copy of the report *Licence to Kill: Police accountability in Mozambique*, please [click here](#).